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Ohio's Preparations  
For the War.





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# Preparations for the War.

READ BEFORE THE

Ohio Commandery of the Military Order  
of the Loyal Legion of the  
United States.

**By Joshua H. Bates,**

Late Brigadier-General United States Volunteers.

— JANUARY 2, 1884. —

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# Ohio's

## Preparations for the War



When our comrade, the Recorder, notified me to prepare a paper for the next meeting, a young companion sitting by my side (General Tom Wood) interposed a caution that I should go no further back in my reminiscences than the day of the Declaration of Independence, which was the limit of his own memory, and heeding his kindly admonition I begin my story but a short period before the War of the Rebellion.

The State of Ohio, except a few uniformed volunteer companies, had no military organizations, and was almost without a feasible system to raise forces for an emergency. When my friend, William H. Lytle, was elected a Major-General of the Ohio militia, full of enthusiasm to revive a military spirit, and to bring this ancient and honorable institution to a respectable position, he claimed my assistance, not only as his friend, but as an *élève* of the government military school, a claim recognized by all its graduates as a binding duty to

give the benefits of that education whenever and wherever they can be useful to our country.

The task was a laborious, and not a very encouraging one; but, under the diligent co-operation of such men as Colonel John Kennett and Colonel A. E. Jones, the military spirit was kept alive and began to assume form. Major Henry G. Kennett raised and organized two companies of zouaves from the young men of the city, Colonel A. E. Jones, nearly a regiment. The State meanwhile gave no encouragement. Legislation was needed to relieve the military organizations from the heavy and necessary expenses attending the performance of their military duties, to provide armories, and in other ways to encourage our young men to join these companies.

Well do I remember my first experience in lobbying. Going to Columbus with my friend Lytle to advocate the passage of a bill to help the volunteer companies, in my innocence of the ways of politicians, I pleaded the necessity that our State should be better prepared to render military assistance to the General Government, and, having passed the bill through the House, how blandly one of our Senators induced me to go home, by assuring me that the bill should receive his favorable consideration, and my astonishment to find that it was his vote that finally killed the bill. The Senator could not be made to believe in the necessity of the work we were trying to do. Even when Fort Sumpter succumbed to the fire of rebel guns, he told me that it was only a trick of S. P. Chase to fire the northern heart. But the torrent of loyalty that was swelling throughout the land, finally swept the Senator into the current, and he came beg-

ging for a position in the then organizing forces. But as he had no elements of a soldier he secured for himself a position as Judge Advocate on General McClellan's staff. My experience with the citizen soldiery had been very limited, and I soon found that there were some things I did not know, nor should have dreamed of until my eyes were opened by one of the sub-officers of a company, innocently coming to me for advice. A parade was about to take place of a battalion in which were two companies known as the Montgomery Guards and the Sarsfield Guards. On the day before the parade a lieutenant of the Sarsfield Guards came to enquire whether it would be better to turn out as the Sarsfield Guards or the Montgomery Guards. To my look of wonder, "I am," says he, "a lieutenant of the Sarsfield Guards and orderly sergeant of the Montgomery Guards, and the captain of the Montgomery Guards is orderly sergeant of the Sarsfield Guards." And so the two companies, in the most friendly manner, were made up of each other, and when paraded at different times were beautiful to behold, one clad in hibernian green, and the other in our national blue; but when paraded together one of them was not there.

There existed an independent military organization, authorized by act of legislature, called the Guthrie Greys. It was a well-drilled and well-appearing body of men, embracing in its ranks many of the most promising young men of this city. It had many advantages over the other military bodies, and for a long time held aloof from them, refusing to recognize any superior authority except the Governor. This anomalous condition of affairs did not conduce to create an efficient military force, and until the independence was

taken from this corps and it was placed under the recognized military heads, there were continual misunderstandings and jealousies, prejudicial alike to both. All these difficulties at length disappeared, and the several military corps were working harmoniously together, when the rebellious mutterings broke forth into open war. At the first call for troops, our Rover regiment was the first to tender its services to the Governor, but the Governor not feeling authorized to accept the regiment as a body, sent one company of the Rovers, Zouaves, and Lafayette Guards, with a company raised by Colonel Len A. Harris on the spur of the moment, without delay to the defence of Washington.

The Guthrie Greys, Colonel Jones' Continentals, the Sarsfield and Montgomery Guards, and the Highland Guards responded nobly and promptly to the call, each becoming the nucleus of a regiment. The Guthrie Greys expanded into the Sixth regiment, the Continentals, with fragments of the Rovers, Zouaves, and Highland Guards into the Fifth regiment, and the Montgomery and Sarsfield Guards into the Tenth regiment.

These regiments, with a regiment raised by Colonel R. L. McCook from our German fellow citizens (the Ninth Ohio), were taken by General Lytle to the race course, and there formed Camp Harrison.

On the 25th of April, while on a visit to General Lytle at his camp, I was ordered by General McClellan to assume command of Camp Harrison. The disappointment was great to General Lytle, who hoped to command this brigade, but being a major-general he had too much rank. The noble fellow, determined to serve his country, threw aside his rank and became colonel of the Tenth Ohio, which he gallantly led in

many battles, and finally gave his life on the field of Chickamauga.

At Camp Harrison the four regiments were soon and easily put into shape, and mustered into service. The wags among the boys were full of mischief, and put our friends in the city to needless alarm, by doleful letters of their suffering and hardships, and astonished me not a little when called upon by committees with offers of provisions to feed our starving soldiers. I had but to show the company kitchens, and the cheerful spirits of the men to satisfy the committee that they were victims of some shallow-pated wag.

The city authorities, alive to the wants of those who were leaving, sent me the following letter :

*Office City Clerk, City Hall,  
Cincinnati, May 8th, 1861.*

*Brigadier-General J. H. Bates, O. V. M.,  
Camp Harrison.*

*Dear Sir :*

*Will you please notify the commanders of the companies to send to the Relief Committee of the City Council, a roll of their members whose families will stand in need of assistance, impressing upon them the necessity of being careful, as many impositions have been already practiced.*

*Respectfully,*

*Geo. M. Casey, City Clerk.*

The regiments were ready for their arms, which came in the shape of browned-barrel muskets, altered from flint to percussion locks, and which the men called "Old Brown Bess." They were not received as graciously as was consistent with good discipline ; in fact, one company refused absolutely to receive the

guns, demanding to have rifles or clubs; but upon my ordering them to be disbanded and sent out of camp as mutinous, unworthy to be soldiers, they changed their minds and took very kindly to Brown Bess. On the 17th of May, it was determined to abandon Camp Harrison, and I was ordered to move my brigade to Camp Dennison, and there to assume command, General McClellan kindly lending me his own headquarters, a dilapidated old stone building, of an order of style part barn, part dwelling, and part store, wholly unfit to live in, until he should come to take command in person.

I found General J. D. Cox in command, having his own brigade, composed of the fourth, seventh, eighth, and eleventh regiments, and General Sleigh, with his brigade, composed of the third, twelfth, and thirteenth regiments.

The camp was put in train of instruction and discipline. The grand guard-mounting, under the personal attention of Major H. G. Kennett, was brought into good order and system; the officers of the day and the officers of the guard were instructed in their several duties by him. The regiments were daily drilled in company and regimental drills, the whole command, at sunset, went through the ceremony of evening parade. The adjutants, regimental and general, had so far improved in their daily morning reports, that they ceased to be returned from department headquarters, endorsed in red ink, "respectfully returned for correction."

The medical department was learning its duties, not only in caring for the sick and regulating the hospitals, but was receiving lessons in literature, as the following will show:

A surgeon's certificate recommending the discharge

of a soldier afflicted with rheumatism, recited that the man was suffering from chronic rheumatism, caused by his limbs having been broken in a "railroad collision." The certificate passed up through all the proper channels, receiving the approval of the general commanding his brigade, the approval of the general commanding the camp, was duly forwarded to the department headquarters, duly returned, endorsed in red ink, "this department is not informed that railroads ever collide." The certificate was regularly sent back through all its channels to the surgeon who issued it; but whether the red ink cured the rheumatism, or what became of the man, was never transmitted through the proper channels, and this department remains uninformed.

In general the camp was in a healthy condition, but some of the boys from the country had not finished their education before becoming soldiers, they had left home without having had the measles and had to undergo this seasoning in camp; but the kindly ministrations of Sister Anthony and her associate sisters, Mrs. Lauderback, Mrs. C. J. Wright, and other ladies from Cincinnati, some of whom were daily at the camp, did much to alleviate the sufferings of the unfortunate sick.

The matter of clothing did not proceed as rapidly as was needed; its deficiency was not only inconvenient, but furnished cause of complaint and trouble, an instance of which manifested itself in a certain regiment refusing to turn out to drill. The colonel came to me to ask what he should do. To my answer, "your men must obey, turn out your regiment to drill," he replies, "but they wont; shall I put them in the guard house?" It was evident this colonel could not handle a regiment; I therefore told him to send his non-com-

misioned officers over to me. They came and I was charmed with their bright and manly appearance, and said to them: "Your colonel complains that your regiment refuses to drill; you are responsible for this. What does it mean?"

Their spokesman said they had been told on leaving home to bring only their oldest clothing; that they would be uniformed immediately on arriving in camp; their clothes had become ragged and worn out, and they were ashamed to show themselves. My simple reply was, "This is no excuse. They must obey orders even if they have no covering but a shirt. Go back and let me see the regiment out at once." Five minutes after the regiment was forming on its parade ground. I mention this only to show the material of some of the regiments.

Every thing was progressing well, and we were about establishing schools of instruction for the officers, when, on the 25th of May, I received these two telegrams:

GENERAL BATES:

As rapidly as possible get your men ready to move. Inspect arms and report how many fit for service. Keep this telegram strictly to yourself, and do not even inform your staff which regiments are most fit to move.

G. B. McCLELLAN,  
Major-General.

BRIGADIER-GENERAL BATES (Confidential):

Issue, to-morrow, the clothing you have on hand to your best regiments. Supply at least six, fully. Telegraph what is wanting to furnish that number completely. Telegraph will be in operation to-morrow. You had better come down to see me at my levee.

G. B. McCLELLAN,  
Major-General.



These telegrams, received at about four o'clock on Saturday afternoon, were acted upon immediately. The eleven regiments were paraded for muster and inspection, and every man and musket personally examined by nine o'clock P. M. When the parade was dismissed there were eleven good regiments of ten thousand men in all, well officered, and ready to take the field. A military force any general would have been proud to command. On Monday following, there was not left of it all so much as an organized corporal's guard.

On the intervening Sunday, the governor and general commanding the department, came to the camp quite early in the day, and after a long conference together, concocted the following order, which had the effect to throw the whole camp into chaos, and to make it necessary to begin anew the formation of these eleven regiments:

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
COLUMBUS, O., May 26th, 1861.

SPECIAL ORDER NO. 246.

The eleven regiments of infantry now at Camp Dennison, will be organized for the three years' service, upon the following basis:

1. The elementary organization will be by companies. A majority of the members of a company must offer such service before the company can be accepted.

2. Accepted companies are permitted to recruit from the remnants of companies declining the three years' service, and failing to recruit sufficiently therefrom, then from other sources.

3. A company, when full, will nominate its officers by ballot, for the approval of the commander-in-chief.

4. If all the companies of a regiment offer service as above, the original regimental organization will remain unchanged, and such regiment will proceed to nominate its officers for the approval of the commander-in-chief.

5. If all the companies do not offer such services, the regiment will be filled up by the assignment of other companies by the com-

mander-in-chief, but in no case will the ballot be taken for company or field officers until the full complement of men for a company, or the full complement of companies for a regiment, shall be made up.

6. The nominations made as hereinbefore provided, will be approved by the commander-in-chief, subject to the following conditions, in accordance with the request of the Secretary of War, viz: that the officers nominated shall be of unquestioned patriotism and morals, of military knowledge, and sound health.

7. The evidence required by the commander-in-chief of compliance with the foregoing provisions, will be the certificate of the general commanding at Camp Dennison, to whom the company rolls will be returned.

8. Every company must report the names of those willing to enter the three years' service by Tuesday noon, the 28th instant.

9. All companies reporting a majority for the three years' service will be arranged in their respective regiments, and will proceed to recruit the necessary complement of men within such time as the general commanding shall determine.

10. The form of oath to be administered by the mustering officer shall be for three years' service if the war shall so long continue.

By Order of the Commander-in-Chief,

H. B. CARRINGTON,

Adjutant-General.

It is needless to say, that this order, although framed with some ingenuity, proved utterly impracticable.

One of the first manifestations of this order was to stir up a rivalry for the offices, and night after night meetings were held in the different companies; speeches made to induce re-enlistments with promotion to the orator, so that the camp became more like a scene of political husting than a military encampment.

Another effect, more serious in its consequences, was the efforts of those whose ardor had cooled and wanted to get off, and yet were ashamed to acknowledge it, in persuading their companions not to re-enlist so as to be an excuse for themselves.

The Sixth, Ninth, and Tenth regiments of my own brigade were the first to perfect their organizations, and to be mustered into service; the other regiments were more slow.

Although the order authorized the mustering in of separate companies, yet, when at the request of Colonel Loren Andrews (a zealous and good officer) who said he had seven reliable companies ready for muster, and he was sure that the mustering of these once begun, the other three companies would catch the enthusiasm and fall into ranks, be mustered in their turn, and thus complete his full regiment. I ordered the mustering officer to proceed. I was met with a positive order from headquarters forbidding such action, and notifying me not to begin a muster unless sure of the entire completeness of the regiment; that the Government would receive only complete regiments. Of course the order was obeyed; but I took the liberty of a citizen to suggest that as an army of five hundred thousand men was called, it would be advisable to accept and muster by companies, or even single men, who once in service could be formed into regiments. As the war progressed this course was adopted.

The inconvenience of this narrow construction of the call was felt in more than one instance. A colonel would report his regiment as ready for muster, and when paraded, and the men called upon to take the oath, a half or a fourth of them would refuse, and thus prevent the mustering of any.

Again the changes of organization without separating the two organizations—three months' and three years' men—worked changes of the officers. Companies would have duplicate captains, duplicate lieutenants; regiments

duplicate field officers. In vain, authority was requested to correct this anomalous condition by transferring supernumerary officers and men. The only replies were in impracticable orders and suggestions.

The whole seemed an interminable muddle; but, determined to save this fine body of officers and men, and to accomplish their organization, there seemed but one course to pursue. Explaining my plans to General Cox, on whose judgment I greatly relied, and who, throughout had freely and willingly borne his share of the work and ably assisted me, and with his advice I ordered every officer and man who was not ready to immediately re-enlist for three years, to leave the camp and go home, and there await further orders. Governor Dennison heartily seconded this act by promptly furnishing the necessary transportation for the men to travel. The discordant elements left; the regiments rapidly organized; were mustered into the service for three years, and the work was done.

After all this, came a letter from the authorities at Washington with a plan to settle the whole trouble. General McClellan called a council of the generals and colonels in my office, and read the document. It thanked and complimented the men for their patriotism in coming forward to defend their country, and assured them that their services should be received. It then went on to provide, that when, by the re-organization a company had two captains, both should serve. The three months' captain should become the junior to his successful rival and so on. This looked like bringing back the old confusion, and when my opinion was asked as to what should be done, I unhesitatingly replied, "file the document in your pigeon hole

and never let it see daylight. The troops are ready for the field. Let the responsibility rest where it belongs."

It appeared to me that the issuing of order No. 246 was a mistake; that it hazarded the loss of eleven fine regiments. To propose re-electing all the officers when the urgency for troops was so great, was worse than trading horses while crossing a stream.

I have yet to learn why the men who were willing to do so, could not have been re-enlisted for three years without disturbing the existing organizations. Nearly all of my own brigade had already pledged themselves to at once re-enlist. The places of three months' men could have been supplied by recruits as their times expired, and the troops could have been used in the meanwhile, thus entailing but little loss of time.

However, the reorganization, notwithstanding the apparent turmoil and fuss, was accomplished in about thirty days, and may stand as a valuable lesson to any other general who may hereafter have the luck to command another Camp Dennison.

















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